

Media, PA— Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) visited the Superior Tube chemical plant in Collegeville. Superior Tube has been the site of several chemical spills of Trichloroethylene (TCE), a chemical which poses serious health and safety risks to Collegeville-area residents. — “The residents of the Collegeville area have been exposed to hazardous materials all too frequently, and over the past year, I have worked directly with the EPA, other federal and state agencies to help correct the operational problems at Superior Tube which led to several dangerous spills, said Congressman Sestak. “I had a very productive discussion this morning with Superior Tube’s management, particularly regarding steps they are pursuing to address concerns over their emission problems, and found our conversation informative and helpful. I was impressed by the professional approach and attitude of their management to ensure that the issue of TCE emissions is fully and rapidly addressed. I expect to follow up and hear soon the concrete steps to address all concerns.”

During an EPA Hearing in August 2007, following a July 10 accident which allowed 2,400 pounds of toxic TCE gas to escape into the air from the Superior Tube plant, Congressman Sestak asked the EPA disallow an exemption that enabled Superior Tube to bypass stringent new standards regarding the emission of carcinogenic chemicals, including TCE:

“Why are some industries required to meet such stringent -- and appropriate -- emission standards while other industries, including narrow tube manufacturing, are not? During a conference call with the EPA, I was told that during consideration of the new regulations, they strongly felt that a cost benefit analysis validated their decision to exempt certain industries from the new regulations. The cost benefit of certain industries and the long-and-short term health of the residents in Collegeville are not mutually exclusive. Putting the industry before the individual should not be tolerated,” said Congressman Sestak.

“We need accountability at the Federal level to ensure this does not happen again. Superior Tube has said it plans to reduce emissions by 30% this year – but this is not enough. The EPA was established in 1970 and charged with protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment; therefore, I am calling on the EPA to include the three exempt industries in the April 17 regulation and show environmental stewardship for which it was established.”

When Congressman Sestak spoke directly to EPA officials and participated in a conference call in May 2007 with the Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, the EPA Air Quality Division, and the Region III Congressional Liaison on the April 17 regulation, he specifically commented that the risk assessment done by EPA was not available and requested a copy of it. Following this, he sent a letter to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson expressing his concern that the EPA decision did not to take action on TCE air emissions, and he asked that the EPA change its approach in the regulation of the toxic pollutant and revisit the exemption for narrow tube manufacturers, and has been in constant contact with the EPA on a regular basis since then.

In a short period of time after that, as a response to Congressman Sestak's questioning regarding the original cost-benefit analysis, the EPA announced that they would re-do the cost benefit analysis, which the Congressman is still awaiting.

In Washington DC, Congressman Sestak has been working with other Congressional members, such as Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Rep. Hilda Solis (D-CA), on legislation to ensure greater accountability to TCE gas emissions at the federal level. Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) has introduced TCE legislation in the Senate.

TCE is used primarily as a solvent to remove grease from metal parts, and it is also an ingredient in adhesives, paint removers, typewriter correction fluids, and spot removers. Breathing large amounts of TCE have been shown to cause impaired heart function, unconsciousness and death. Even small amounts have been shown to be harmful, causing headaches, lung irritation, dizziness, poor coordination, and difficulty concentrating. Prolonged exposure to TCE can lead to nerve, kidney and liver damage. If TCE gets into the water supply, it can lead to these maladies as well as impaired fetal development in pregnant women and impaired immune system function.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.